

SSSC meeting

July 16, 2002

(Held in Room 470 of the Governor's Office Building)

Attending:

Mark Allen, Office of Administration
Keith Russell, Office of Administration
Ron Hooker, Agriculture
John Brunnert, Agriculture
Glenda Verslues, Conservation
Julie Ives, Corrections
Steve Taylor, Corrections
Martha Shea, Health & Senior Services
Mark Doerner, Insurance
Steve Dunn, Labor & Industrial Relations
Darles Vernon, Labor & Industrial Relations
Jim Lowery, Mental Health
Stephen B. Moody, Natural Resources
Cherri Baysinger-Daniel, Natural Resources
Pat McCormick, Adj. Gen./Public Safety
Chris Adler, Revenue,
Dean Powell, Revenue
Kelly O'Brien, Revenue
Allen A. Schulte, Social Services
John Schumert, Occu-Tec
Skuli Gudmundsson, Occu-Tec
Mark Kaiser, Office of Administration
Janice Steenburgen, Office of Administration

Chairwoman Martha Shea called the meeting to order and had the attendees introduce themselves. Martha then took up the minutes of the March 26, 2002 meeting and asked if everyone had read them and whether there were any suggested changes. Steve Moody commented on a portion of the minutes that discussed the three defibrillators DNR now has on hand; he noted that only one of the three is available for special events. With a change to the minutes on that point, the March 26 minutes were approved.

Next, John Schumert discussed the early result of the state's statistics, including data related to the new Return to Work program. While he only had 15 days of data available on the RTW program, the data nevertheless show some evidence that the program is working, as the "lost work days incidence rate" had dropped rather dramatically from 1.79 to 1.66, most of it occurring in March (at the start of the program). However, he also noted a slight increase in the "rate of injury incidence rate," which had gone up slightly. Martha asked Skuli Gudmundsson how these numbers compared with private

industry. He indicated that while the national averages were going down for private industry, the state's numbers are roughly half the national averages.

John then turned to a series of charts showing the state's list of Top Ten Injuries (for fiscal years 1995 through 2002). He indicated our numbers are similar to the results shown by Liberty Mutual in a recent study (except for the category "combative," which is somewhat unique to governmental exposures). John then answered a number of questions about what gets included in the various categories (e.g. "material handling"); John said that a certain amount of judgment is involved in deciding the category into which a particular injury is placed. Also, John has come up with his own coding system for the injuries, with a short narrative describing the injuries. He can compile them for each Department for those that want to see the type of injuries that are occurring. Finally, John is working with Keith Russell to use a map of the Capitol Complex to pinpoint where injuries are occurring, to see if there are any patterns or danger areas.

Skuli asked what we are going to do with all the various analyses John is developing; he suggested that we use the data to set goals for improvement. In response to a question about what type of goals would reduce random "slips and falls," Steve Moody indicated the importance of a program that keeps "safety" in employees' minds, whatever the situation. Carelessness, even for a moment, can result in an injury. When Steve does a safety inspection, he points out those "tripping" hazards in the environment to which the employees have, over time, become desensitized. A simple example would be to remind employees to be safe if they are going to, say, rearrange furniture. Also, following-up after an accident to ask supervisors what they are going to do to correct the situation helps improve matters. Skuli offered a favorite saying ("Don't let what you can't do get in the way of what you can do"), and two premises: "It's not acceptable to get hurt here" and "All accidents are preventable."

After a break, Keith Russell gave a presentation on a safety program developed regarding large emergencies. The question was how to prepare to deal with tornados, fire, earthquake, bomb threats, or terrorism. During the legislative session, there may be up to 10,000 people in the Capitol Complex area. While there are a number of "official" first responders, what happens if they are busy elsewhere? A committee was formed to determine how many already-trained first responders are typically present in the Capitol Complex who could respond if needed. They developed an application form to identify available skills and equipment. They are interested in medically-trained individuals and people who can perform support functions. So far, they have identified 22 possible candidates. Team members get an "RR" (for "Rapid Response") on their I.D. badges to allow them access to the scene of the emergency. Team members could respond until others arrive, setting up triage, evaluating the situation, allowing ambulance access, giving information to the professionals, and supporting the professionals until they want the team members out of the way. Team members are told to keep themselves safe and to do only what they are trained to do. Keith is looking to expand the program, and asked the Committee to contact him with ideas on possible candidates, resources and ideas. They are planning six annual 2- to 3-hour training sessions to get the team members "coordinated." Martha asked about potential legal liability, and was told that under the

Good Samaritan law, the team members are protected to the extent they are acting within the scope of their training.

Next, Janice discussed the early Return-to-Work program. By way of background, she indicated that, while the state's work comp claims have been stable in recent years, indemnity costs have been increasing, on average, 15.5% a year. Indemnity expenses in 2002 were estimated at \$2.8 million and lost work days were up 29%, so, in these areas, the state was clearly heading in the wrong direction. A project team looked at the problem recommended the early RTW program, which went into effect in March. O.A. projected an annual savings of \$800,000, but, the program is exceeding expectations. After the first three months of the program, it looks like the saving will be around \$1.4 million a year, with 40,000 days of additional productivity annually. Janice said the various state agencies deserved much of the credit, with special praise going to the Departments of Mental Health and Corrections.

Jim Lowery said that, yes, RTW can be a pain, but if you work to make it work, you can see dramatic results. The new program has forced managers to adapt, and it encourages the employees to get back to their regular shifts, co-workers, etc. Mark Kaiser said it helps, especially if the agency is already understaffed. Julie Ives said Corrections puts the RTW-employees on the phones until they are back to 100%, and that the program works best when the emergency room sends the employee back, right away, to a light duty capacity. Mark said two key elements are that there is now a financial penalty to the agency in not doing RTW, and that there is top-management buy-in by the Governor and the Cabinet.

Martha then opened the round-table discussion. Mark Kaiser asked what effect recent budget cuts will have on safety. Steve Moody said DNR received a 25% cut. Jim Lowery said Mental Health had lost money for safety. Keith Russell said even if there is no money, there may still be resources available. Mark Kaiser urged the agencies not to reverse course, but rather, to keep the safety program fresh and beneficial, despite the budgetary constraints.

Various departments updated the Committee on recent developments:

- Martha indicated that Health & Senior Services had reorganized their safety committee as a result of absorbing Senior Services. They conducted their first fire drills (and evacuated in three minutes) and had purchased bio-terrorism vests.
- Jim Lowery said they have a new Department Director, who has facilities experience, but how this will impact the safety program remains to be seen. Jim has set up a communications link to all facilities to disseminate information promptly. The staffing-level situation is a major issue.
- Steve Moody indicated that DNR has discussed issues and "policy" development on firearms, vehicles, the use of pepper mace, and parking lot security. Despite being a diverse department with six divisions, for the first time, everyone is working together. They may need to develop a policy on secondhand smoke. They have had successful fire and tornado drills, and are working on the problem

of “standards” for the space heaters and fans employees are using to maintain comfortable conditions. Steve is working to complete his safety inspections. Budget cuts will have a big impact.

- Steve Dunn said Labor and Industrial Relations is working on increasing safety awareness. They have also been looking at how to continue providing services in an emergency (i.e., “continuity of government”), which has revealed a number of areas for improvement. They would also like to have employees report hazards on a more regular basis.
- Chris Adler said Revenue is focusing on new-employee orientation. In addition, they put out their new safety coordinator emergency response manual.
- Glenda Verslues said Conservation has an Academy of Excellence for training. They are working on drivers’ and ATV training. Turnovers will be affecting their safety committees. They are also working on continuity of government issues.
- Julie Ives briefly discussed Corrections’ RTW program, which they will evaluate after six months. They have also developed an “incident tracking” program.
- Ron Hooker and John Brunnert discussed various projects at Agriculture, such as running a bomb threat scenario, in cooperation with Facilities Management. They are hoping to do site assessments of the department’s many facilities in the future. Skuli indicated OCCU-TEC has some checklists that might be of help, and Steve Dunn recommended the OSHA checklists.
- Mark Doerner discussed the possibility of looking at John’s database to cull examples of the types and costs of “white collar” incidents in other agencies to use as examples of situations to avoid.
- Pat McCormick said that, while he is the only “state” safety person at the Adjutant General’s Office, his federal co-workers provide assistance and resources. He was able to participate in the National Guard’s “Take Five” program (where people are encouraged to take five seconds to think about what they are doing). They have done train-the-trainer risk management training of 320 people over the last four years. This year, they are going to focus on “confined spaces” and “lock out/tag out”. They are also going to focus on ammo handling, given the terrorist threat.
- Allen Schulte said Social Services is doing their annual on-site safety inspections of facilities. They have also been exploring different methods of protecting their employees from potential client hostility, given the new demands placed on clients as result of welfare reform.
- Keith Russell said Facilities Management now holds monthly safety meetings with a plant maintenance engineer and employees, which he thinks have helped reduce injury rates. Also, he said we need to get people prepared for bomb threats, so they know how to do an “occupant search.” He said there is a good outline in the “Red Book.” (Apparently, the state phone book has instructions on how to get a call traced in case of a bomb threat.)

At the end of the meeting, Steve Moody asked about the status of the Governor’s re-authorization of the Committee. Mark Kaiser said they are still looking for some new ideas or topics to be part of a new mandate for the Committee, to help re-energize the whole process.

